

FAQs

These Questions and Answers have been provided to give an indication of what happens in severe winter weather conditions; they are not intended as being a statement of policy. Each day is different and the Council has to be able to react accordingly.

SALTING THE ROAD

How long does the Council have its contractor on stand-by?

The highways winter service period for the winter 2016/17 runs from **Monday 17 October 2016, with our contractor on standby from 31 October 2016** through to 2 April 2017. We have access to 3 gritting vehicles and 9 drivers.

What does the Council do when the roads are likely to be affected by snow or ice?

Council officers monitor the weather forecasts over the winter period. The detail they receive is more than is seen on the TV and includes for predictions of road surface temperatures over a period of time. The officers are able to make more accurate decisions as to when is the best time for the gritters to go out. Like any forecast, it can be wrong, the weather is still not as predictable as we would all like it.

Which roads does the Council treat and why?

The Council is responsible for a total highway network length of 460 kilometres or 285.9 miles. The Council seeks to maintain as its first priority the main roads (the primary salting network) running through the Borough, the total length of the primary salting network is 178 kilometres (111 miles). These roads enable access to the national network and help ensure the overall flow of traffic. Subject to resources we can then focus our attention on the secondary routes (the total length of the secondary salting network is 56 kilometres (35 miles). The details of which roads are salted are available on the Council website. If we are confident with these routes, we will then look to work to the third tier roads to address problem areas. These are primarily within the community residential areas. Further salting is only undertaken as resources permit.

Why does the Council not put out more salt bins?

The Council has a number of salt bins throughout the Borough, these are located at key sites largely dependant upon the road gradient. The location of bins and how they are selected can be found on the Council website. Keeping the bins stocked is a major task, taking two teams up to two days. The content is there for road users to use on the highway in times of need and should not be used for private driveways/paths. If we have evidence that salt is being misused then we would have to consider removing the bin as we would be unable to keep it filled

How is salt applied and how does it work?

The Council employs Ringway and they have 3 vehicles and salt is laid at spread rate of between 8 and 20 grammes/sq. metre per run, depending upon weather conditions. The salt works by lowering the freezing point of water but it also needs some vehicle movement on it to make it effective. The lowering of the freezing point is only effective to around minus 6 degrees Centigrade. At low temperatures water on the roads may still freeze. The primary salting network is covered by 3 salting routes, each route is designed to give a target maximum treatment time of 3 hours. The secondary salting network is covered by 2 routes, each route is similarly designed to give a target maximum treatment time of 3 hours. The response time to mobilize salting lorries at any time, night or day, is 1 hour.

Where does the salt come from?

Our stockpile is in our depot located centrally in the Borough. That stock is normally replenished from the salt mines in Cheshire. It takes all day for a truck to get here and back and orders are placed in advance for restocking in an attempt to avoid long waiting periods for delivery as the demand increases.

How much stock does the Council have and what happens if it runs out?

We stock for normal winter maintenance and we have enough to meet normal conditions as the stock would be replenished on an ongoing basis. At the start of the winter season we have nearly 2000 tonnes in stock. When we experience a period of abnormal conditions that affect many parts of the country, then getting restocked may become more difficult. How long we could continue is something that we can not predict but we exceed the recommended stock levels. If/as supplies run down then decisions are made as to whether or not to vary the application rate or mix. If supplies run out, it is possible to apply sand, but this is not the most effective way to deal with the problem.

What about snowploughs?

In urban areas they are usually of limited use. They work best in rural roads and where there is a reasonable depth of snow. The plough cannot be set too low because it could damage the road. Roads with speed humps are a particular problem for snow ploughs as the speed humps cannot be seen in the snow. We do not need to rely on farmers or contractors to help us out, the Council has access to its own snowploughing/spreading equipment which we would utilise 24hrs per day if we needed to.

How much does it cost?

The cost of salting the roads varies according to rates of spread and times of application. In round numbers costs vary from £1,000 to £2,000 a time to salt just the primary route network once. It costs approximately £2,000 to salt the secondary route network.

SALTING OR CLEARING OTHER AREAS**What about paths and cycleways?**

The Council does not have the ability to treat or clear all footpaths. The resources available are focused on the town centre followed by the estate shopping areas. Cycleways may benefit from the road treatment but otherwise they are not salted. Where we can we will look to salt and clear underpass and main pedestrian areas/routes.

What about the town centre and neighbourhood shopping areas?

Every effort is made to keep these areas usable and in times of severe snow our manpower resources will be deployed to support in these areas as a first priority.

Does the Council help in other areas?

The Council can only deploy its resources to deal with the highways and to clear Council-owned offices and its residential homes. Communities, organisations and individuals need to be proactive in helping themselves. The Council has limited resources which it will utilise according to pre determined priorities.

Who co-ordinates all of this?

Staff from the Highway Asset Management team co-ordinate the day-to-day operations. In extreme weather conditions the arrangements changes and resources are deployed by a senior management team. When this happens we may also be required to coordinate at a national level and through our emergency planning role we report back direct to government.

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP MYSELF?

Is there anything I can do to help myself at home?

We encourage residents to be resilient, adopt a self help attitude and be community spirited. Be aware of the local forecast and road conditions by listening to the radio, watching the TV or using the internet. Take precautions to grit/clear your own paths/driveways (refer to the Snow Code listed) and clear snow from your car before using. Get your own salt supplies in advance. They are often available from builders' merchants or garden centres - but don't leave it too late! Finally, be a good neighbour and check on the elderly and vulnerable who may need your support during snowy periods as they may not be able to get to the shops or collect medication.